

RAINIER CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS FAQ

Updated: September 2020

This document reflects Frequently Asked Questions we've received about the [Rainier Improvements](#) project that aren't already prominent in other materials such as the [project fact sheet](#). We'll update this continually as we receive more questions and have more info to share.

1. What are the results of Phase 1 between Columbia City and Hillman City?

Data show that the Rainier Pilot Project improved safety by reducing speeds, improving pedestrian crossings, and improving turning movements at intersections. We did a thorough evaluation of Phase 1 and are still monitoring traffic volumes and collisions to see if modifications need to be made. Below are the highlights of the [2016 evaluation report](#).

Collisions

Overall collisions decreased by 15%. Injury collisions decreased by 30% and collisions with people walking and biking were down 40%.

Speeds

The percent of drivers speeding decreased by just over 1/2 in the northbound direction and almost 1/3 in the southbound direction.

Bus travel times

During the PM peak commute, southbound buses are traveling the corridor about a minute faster. Transit travel times during the morning peak hours increased slightly (2 seconds).

General traffic travel times

During outreach, we anticipated that the street re-design would add 1 to 2 minutes of delay for general traffic depending on the time of day with a maximum delay of 2.5 minutes during afternoon peak hour traffic. Data at the time of the evaluation shows northbound travel times during the afternoon peak commute increased by 1 minute and southbound travel times increased by an average of 1 minute and 21 seconds.

Project neighbors

We didn't conduct a formal evaluation with project neighbors, but we've generally heard positive feedback. Here's something we heard from Joya Iverson, Owner of the Tin Umbrella Coffee Shop in Hillman City: **"There's less speeding, fewer backups when turning, less chaos when walking, and just less fear! Our neighborhood feels more connected."**

2. What will construction be like?

This is not a paving project so does not involve the same corridor-wide lengthy construction impact you may have seen on other projects. The **lane layout changes** involve removing and replacing striping on the road and relocating trolley wires. We expect the 2020 lane layout changes to happen over 1 weekend – likely in September.

Heavier construction in 2020 will be concentrated at [Rainier and Rose](#). Our team will keep adjacent neighbors informed of what to expect during construction and will work to minimize impacts as much as possible.

3. What kind of outreach did you do?

Outreach in 2017 included over 1,200 survey responses in various languages, dozens of meetings with residents and business groups, and attendance at various community events.

We're continuing to engage adjacent businesses and residents by going door-to-door and meeting with community stakeholders. You can learn more about what we did and what we heard in our [outreach summary](#).

4. Why does the Phase 2 end at S Henderson St and not further south?

Rainier, south of Henderson, has a list of safety treatments that we've implemented since 2015. Treatments include:

- a. Lane layout changes (i.e. reducing number of travel lanes and adding bike lanes) and sidewalk enhancements on Rainier south of 56th Ave S in 2015
- b. New crosswalk signal at 52nd Ave S with better sidewalk connection to Mapes Walkway that connects to Rainier Beach High School in 2015
- c. New curb bulb, pedestrian island, and public art (chess pieces) at 51st Ave S in 2015
- d. Crosswalk improvements at S 51st St in 2016
- e. Crossing signal improvements at S Fisher Pl in 2016
- f. Leading Pedestrian Interval (i.e. changing signal timing to give people walking a head start) at S Fisher Pl in February 2019
- g. Reduced the speed limit to 25 mph on all arterial streets in the Rainier Beach Urban Village in March 2019
- h. Installed a temporary curb bulb at Rainier and Sturtevant in March 2019

5. Why the schedule change?

We had been planning to complete the changes to the lane configuration on Rainier in late 2018 or sometime in 2019, but extensive traffic modeling of the proposed concept found substantial delays to southbound bus travel times. We're revising the design to best meet both SDOT and the community's priorities to improve safety and keep buses moving.

We made changes to the street layout (i.e. replace through lanes with bus lanes and a center turn lane) in some sections in 2019, and we'll complete the remaining lane changes in 2020.

6. Does the project include bike lanes on Rainier?

The [Rainier Corridor Improvements project](#) doesn't include new bike lanes on Rainier. We heard from many that bike lanes on Rainier are important, but the top two priorities we heard from neighbors were to reduce crashes and keep buses moving. Approximately 13,000 people ride the route 7 daily, making this the second highest ridership bus route in Seattle. We studied the bike lane concept closely, but Rainier Ave S has big obstacles including high car traffic volumes, high bus ridership, many driveways/side streets, etc. that make adding bike lanes really challenging. [Here's the outreach summary.](#)

We now have the Rainier Valley Neighborhood Greenway ([here's the full route](#)) and we're building greenway improvements (crossing upgrades and traffic calming) on S Kenyon St between Seward Park Ave S and Beacon Ave S. We also recently opened protected bike lanes on [Wilson Ave S](#), [Swift/Myrtle/Othello](#), and [S Columbian Way/S Alaska St](#).

7. Will this project indirectly push drivers onto other streets? How do you plan to calm traffic on other streets?

We studied the behavior change of drivers as part of Rainier Corridor Improvements Phase 1 (between Columbia City and Hillman City) and found that, as anticipated, some drivers are diverting from Rainier to MLK Jr Way S. We documented a nearly 5,900 vehicle per day decrease in daily traffic on Rainier and a nearly 8,800 vehicle increase on MLK. We see that as a positive change because MLK is under-capacity and better suited for freight traffic and through travel. At the time of the report, volumes on nearby arterials like Seward Park Ave S and Lake Washington Blvd had not significantly changed. ([See the full evaluation report including the map on page 14.](#))

However, we recognize that Phase 2 is a longer stretch of Rainier and could likely create more diversion onto nearby streets than Phase 1. To anticipate that, we are looking at potential traffic calming on nearby streets such as Seward Park Ave S.

Also – before, during, and after Phase 2 is complete, we are monitoring traffic volumes on adjacent and parallel arterial streets for diversions, so we can make modifications as needs arise.